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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

EVOLUTION OF COMMUNIST POSITIONS CONCERNING NEGOTIATIONS

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Current Intelligence

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OCI No. 0482/65

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
4 January 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Evolution of Communist Positions
Concerning Negotiations

Summary

The DRV position on settling the war has remained firmly based on its four-point proposal set forth last April. Several of these points are an accurate gist of the 1954 Geneva agreements; others, however, depart from both the spirit and the letter of the accords. Hanoi has not made explicit whether it regards the carrying out of the four points as preconditions for negotiations on the war; its most recent statements, however, implicitly suggest that it does.

The peace terms of the National Liberation Front have never been precisely delineated by the Communists; both Hanoi and the Front, however, regard a manifesto of Front intent in the war published last March as containing their peace proposals. In general, the Front has taken a tougher position than Hanoi on the question of US withdrawal from Vietnam prior to the start of negotiations.

Peking has maintained the most adamant stand of any of the Asian Communists against negotiations. It has both condemned Soviet encouragement of talks and obliquely warned Hanoi against starting negotiations. Although the Soviet Union apparently is encouraging Hanoi to seek political alternatives to the war, the indications are that Moscow is prepared for the time being to continue military aid to the DRV.

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North Vietnam

1. The North Vietnamese attitude toward a "settlement" of the war has remained basically unchanged since DRV Premier Pham Van Dong put forward a four-point proposal on the conflict in a speech on 8 April 1965 before the DRV National Assembly. This proposal was issued as a reply to President Johnson's speech of 7 April at Johns Hopkins University. Dong's four points were as follows:

- a. Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people-- peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. According to the Geneva agreements, the US Government must withdraw from South Vietnam US troops, military personnel, and weapons of all kinds, dismantle all US military bases there, and cancel its military alliance with South Vietnam. It must end its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. According to the Geneva agreements, the US Government must stop its acts of war against North Vietnam and completely cease all encroachments on the territory and sovereignty of the DRV.
- b. Pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided into two zones the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected. The two zones must refrain from entering into any military alliance with foreign countries and there must be no foreign military bases, troops, or military personnel in their respective territory.
- c. The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the program of the NFLSV without any foreign interference.

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d. The peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference.

2. After listing these points, Dong asserted that the DRV Government considered the "stand" expounded in them "the basis for the soundest political settlement of the Vietnam problem." If this "basis is recognized," Dong stated, "favorable conditions" will be created for a "peaceful settlement." The North Vietnamese apparently attached this vague formulation to their proposals in order to leave themselves some maneuvering room should they at some point decide to modify or expand their terms. Subsequently the North Vietnamese have never made it completely clear whether they regard the four points as preconditions for negotiations or only as proposals to be discussed after negotiations have been started.

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4. The DRV's position on this question, however, was again obscured by the remarks of Ho Chi Minh in an interview with a prominent French newsman which was broadcast on 15 August by Hanoi radio. Although he did not explicitly make US troop withdrawal a precondition for talks, he did call for "tangible proof" that the US accepted all of the DRV's four points. Since Ho's interview, other DRV statements have also occasionally called for tangible or "concrete" proof that the US accepts the four points. They imply, but do not state explicitly that such proof must be given before any talks are started.

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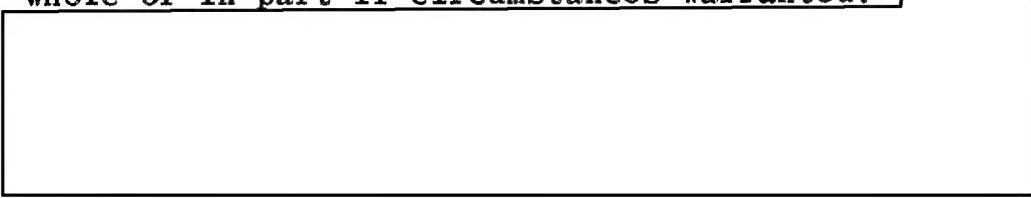


8. The second point in Pham Van Dong's proposals is an accurate gist of the intent of the 1954 accords. The accords stated that the demilitarized zone should not be interpreted as a political or territorial boundary, but only as a military demarcation line. The accords also referred to the goal of eventual reunification of Vietnam, and banned military alliances, foreign military bases, and so forth, pending reunification.

9. In the last two points of Dong's proposals, however, the DRV has departed almost entirely from the spirit as well as the letter of the Geneva agreements. The thrust of points 3 and 4 is that the settlement of Vietnamese political affairs is to be left entirely to the Vietnamese people without any foreign supervision. The Geneva agreements, however, definitely provided for an international supervisory presence, at least while the initial arrangements for a further political settlement were being worked out in Vietnam. The International Control Commission (ICC), set up under the accords, had as one of its missions the supervision of elections in 1956 in both North and South Vietnam for the expression of the "national will" on the question of reunification.

10. Although left unstated, it appeared to be the intent of the Geneva agreements that an international presence would also be necessary to guarantee the establishment of democratic government after elections on the issue of reunification.

11. Despite Hanoi's constant harping in its propaganda on the necessity of adherence to the Geneva Accords, DRV spokesmen in private have indicated that the agreements could be ignored in whole or in part if circumstances warranted.



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The National Liberation Front

12. The so-called "peace terms" of the Communist-controlled Front group in South Vietnam were set forth on 22 March interspersed within a rambling five-point statement. Essentially, the Front's five points were as follows:

- a. The condemnation of US policy in Vietnam along with a catalogue of US war "crimes" there since 1954.
- b. An expression of the determination of the Vietnamese "people" to "kick out" the US "imperialists" from Vietnam and to "liberate" South Vietnam. According to the statement, the Vietnamese will never stop fighting until their ultimate objectives of "independence, democracy, peace, and neutrality" have been obtained. The "only way out" for the US is to "withdraw" from South Vietnam. The statement declared that "at present, all negotiations are useless" on the war as long as "the US imperialists do not withdraw all troops, weapons, and means of war from Vietnam, and as long as the Liberation Front does not have the "decisive voice." By this the Front apparently meant that it should have a dominant voice in any political settlement of the conflict.

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- c. A pledge of determination to "advance toward" the reunification of Vietnam.
- d. A declaration that the Front has the "full right" to receive international assistance. While relying primarily on its own force, the Front "will buy war materiel from any country," and will call "if necessary" for foreign volunteers.
- e. A call on all South Vietnamese people to join in the fight to "liberate" the South.

13. At its publication, the Front statement was primarily touted by the Viet Cong as a manifesto of their intent in the war. It was not until after Pham Van Dong's speech setting forth the DRV's four-point peace proposal that both Hanoi and the Viet Cong began to point to the Front statement of 22 March as containing the Viet Cong peace terms. Subsequent Front statements have largely echoed the 22 March manifesto, differing only in that several of them hardened the Front's position on the withdrawal of US forces. A statement of 14 June, for example, claimed that "all negotiations are useless" if the US imperialists "have not yet withdrawn" from South Vietnam. A Front central committee statement of 25 November, however, did not attach any condition of timing to a withdrawal as a preliminary to a settlement.

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14. Although there is no explicit evidence to support the contention, we believe the apparently harder Front position on US withdrawal during the last few months, in contrast with Hanoi's, is maintained primarily for tactical reasons by the Viet Cong. Hanoi's final position on this point, whatever it turns out to be, would probably be the deciding word if the Vietnamese Communists decided to move toward a political settlement.

Communist China

15. Peking has maintained an adamant stand against negotiations on the Vietnam situation, and has repeatedly lashed out at the Soviet Union for trying to promote talks on the problem. The most recent major attack on Moscow came on 30 December 1965 in a People's Daily editorial charging that the Soviets are helping the US in "its plot of peaceful negotiations." The Chinese asserted that such "appeasement and capitulationism" merely serve to "inflate the aggressive arrogance of the US."

16. The Chinese have continued to stress their support for the Hanoi four-point formula and the Liberation Front five-part statement on negotiations. On 14 December People's Daily reiterated the Chinese position that these form the "only correct basis" for the solution of the Vietnam question. The closest Peking has come to stating that the withdrawal of US troops was a prerequisite for negotiations came in a People's Daily editorial on 20 July, which asserted that the withdrawal of US troops is "the basic point and most important prerequisite for the settlement of the Vietnam question" and added that so long as US forces remain in South Vietnam "there is no point" in talking about other aspects of a Vietnam settlement.

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17. Peking publicly disparaged the current US peace initiatives on 1 January, charging that the pause in air attacks was nothing but the prelude to a new US escalation of the war, and asserting that the US objective in advocating "unconditional discussions" was to force the Vietnamese people to surrender and to accept the "permanent stay" of US troops in Vietnam. The People's Daily editorial on New Year's Day applauded North Vietnamese determination in the struggle with US "imperialism" and asserted that Hanoi had "pointedly scuttled" the US "peace intrigue."

The Soviet Union

18. Immediately after the first US bombing attacks against the DRV, the Soviet Union appeared willing to try to arrange negotiations of some sort on Southeast Asian problems. However, as the war intensified and Chinese attacks on Soviet "collusion" with the US mounted, the USSR retreated from this position. By the end of February Moscow was already maintaining that the US must cease its bombings before there could be negotiations. While the Russians were quick to endorse the Hanoi government's four points in general terms and have firmly adhered to the position that peace in Vietnam can be found only by using the four points as a "basis," they have continued to place major emphasis on the impossibility of any negotiations while the US is attacking the territory of a "fraternal state." They have advanced no other explicit preconditions to negotiations.

19. With the escalation of the Vietnam war, Soviet officials have continued to stress privately Moscow's lack of maneuver room and have clearly indicated their frustration over their inability to do very much to influence US policy in Southeast Asia. Although Moscow has stayed in step with Hanoi on the question of negotiations, there is enough evidence to indicate that the Russians are almost certainly using their influence to urge DRV leaders to keep a flexible position in order to take full advantage of unforeseen developments and opportunities.

20. The Soviet leaders apparently see no prospect for any immediate break in the war. They can be expected to persist in their line that a cessation

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of US air strikes is a necessary first step toward talks. In this context, the forthcoming visit of one of the USSR's top leaders--party secretary Shelepin--to North Vietnam is particularly interesting. His visit represents a direct challenge to China's influence in Hanoi, and will mark the first trip to the DRV by a high-level Soviet leader since the Kosygin mission last February. The Soviets probably feel that the current pause in US bombing raids against the DRV provides a good opportunity to encourage Hanoi to seek political alternatives to the war.

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MEMO NO.: **OCI No. 0152/66**

SUBJECT: **Evaluation of Communist Positions Concerning Negotiations**

REQUESTED OR ORIGINATED BY: **Mr. McGeorge Bundy**

DISSEMINATION:

Reactions internal and high-level external

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Date

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PURPOSE : _____

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SPECIAL DISSEM : Category B, routine internal GRAPHICS? _____
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